

The University of Chicago

THE RELATION OF
CONCEPT AND DEMONSTRATION IN
THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR
OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

1940

By
HERBERT LAMM

Private Edition, Distributed by
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INTRODUCTION

The subject which has been chosen for treatment in this paper is that which has come to be called the ontological argument. This argument, as is evident to anyone even superficially acquainted with philosophical literature, has been treated with such formidable frequency that the intention to add one more treatment to an already large number calls for some explanation. The explanation which is to be offered by us is in the nature of a qualification of the statement we originally made as to the theme to be undertaken.

We have said that this theme is the ontological argument, but it is, more strictly, reflection on a specific aspect presented by the career undergone by that argument, which gave rise to the problem which concerns us here. The interest which that aspect involves we believe to be a peculiarly apt illustration of what happens to philosophic problems in their career in the history of philosophy.

The specific aspect of the ontological argument which we have referred to is bound up with its recurrent appearance in which its career has repeated a rhythmic alternation of decisive refutation followed by a most intense revival. The mere tracing of its career as a peculiar fact to be recorded would in itself furnish an interesting subject to the historian. Our problem, however, is not essentially a historical one, but rather centers around the philosophic interest which is suggested in the repeated contention that the ontological argument is valid and invalid. The fact that the argument recurs is admittedly a historical fact. It is, however, the recurrence of a philosophical problem that takes place. Two aspects are presented by the recurrence, which make evident the non-historical character of the subject. First, the question arises: "Is it the ontological argument that recurs?" Second: "What is it that causes it to keep being refuted?" This fate suffered by the ontological argument is one which is symptomatic of the philosophical problem, and of the nature of philosophical inquiry.

There have, however, been different contexts in which the ontological argument has been presented as valid, and refuted. As stated by Anselm, for example, it takes on the form which has been characterized as "realistic," since, in Anselm, God is proved to have an existence "extra mentem"; and similarly, Gaunilo's refutation of Anselm's argument is "realistic," for by denying that such an existence "extra mentem" has been demonstrated by Anselm, he does not deny that there is existence "extra mentem."

The context within which Kant rejects the ontological argument is that of the problem of knowledge. Thus, the Kantian manner of discussion has been characterized as "idealistic," since the nature of the human mind for Kant imposes necessary restrictions on the method of philosophic discussion. Hegel's acceptance of the demonstration rejected by Kant is made possible by his own theory of knowledge, which was essentially different, and yet the framework underlying his discussion of the ontological proof is by his own intention "idealistic" in character. We shall try to show in the proper place, therefore, how Kant in his rejection and Hegel in his defence both resolve the Anselmian argument into terms of the problem of knowledge.

The contemporary manner of discussing the argument is in terms neither of "realism" nor of "the problem of knowledge," but rather of the logical statement, and inference between such statements. Our example shall be taken from a recent debate between Gilbert Ryle and E. E. Harris, which revolves around the question as to the existential import of propositions.

We have chosen this particular triple set of pairs of figures because they lend themselves most readily to the end which we have stated. Although we might have substituted other figures to represent similar standpoints, yet the complexity of aspects exhibited by the arrangement of the triple set which we have selected serves admirably to show not only the diversity of standpoints within which our argument may be formulated and interpreted, but also the manner in which the ontological proof has cut across this variety of standpoints. There being three standpoints, namely that of "realism," "idealism," and of the symbolic statement, within the frame of each standpoint there is an opposite pair of figures whose opposition is not that of a standpoint. This would tend to suggest, therefore, that the relations among these three pairs of thinkers is not as simple as the customary

analysis of the argument has assumed.

Within any one standpoint each thinker proceeds according to a philosophic measure which is partly a reflection of that standpoint in general, and partly a reflection of the particular systematic ideal of the individual philosopher. As a reflection of the standpoint in general, the philosophic measure will have corresponding restrictions on the course of the argument which moves within the bounds of that standpoint. For example, if the standpoint is that of "realism" the discussion will be primarily about kinds of things, and the restriction on the argument from this point of view will be determined ultimately by the kinds of things which the argument discusses. Within the standpoint, however, the particular philosophic conception of the thinker may impose restrictions other than those of the standpoint in general. Similar considerations will apply, of course, to the other two standpoints.

It should be evident from the above that the emphasis in our analysis will tend to be rather on the relations of these philosophers, their similarities and differences, rather than on each individual philosopher for himself. This relation with respect to the problem of the ontological argument we take to be symptomatic of philosophic problems and of the nature of philosophic inquiry, which keeps being expressed in a diversity of standpoints, and yet throughout that diversity there is a thread of identity which we call philosophical. Such a problem, then, we believe the ontological argument itself to be.

CHAPTER I

ANSELM AND GAUNILON

The ontological proof as it is presented in Anselm's Proslogium depends on the possibility of conception by which an idea is had, through faith (as the source of that idea), of "that than which nothing greater can be conceived."¹ Anselm wishes to understand that God is what he believes Him to be; but this understanding will itself constitute the proof.

There are, however, two elements which must be discriminated in Anselm's argument. First, there is the concept of that than which nothing greater can be conceived. Second, there is the demonstration that that of which it is a concept exists. That both of these are elements essential to the argument is another way of saying that without either, it would not be precisely the argument which Anselm himself intended.

Let us suppose, however, that the essence of the argument resided in the fact that it was a demonstration of existence. In that case, why should Anselm say that he wishes to understand that God is what he believes him to be? Faith for him is the source of an idea. The question which arises, naturally, is whether it is the source of any idea; or is it rather the source of an idea of something with a determinate character? If the idea is of a general nature, then the demonstration would be concerned with the existence of anything, rather than of some one thing as distinct from other things. In that case, the idea which we have of God would be no different from any other idea, and we would proceed to demonstrate the existence as we would that of the object of any other concept (assuming, of course, that such a demonstration is possible). We are arguing now merely that if such a demonstration is possible, the character of the concept of God would not affect the nature of the demonstration on the assumption that

¹S. Anselmi, Opera Omnia, ed. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt (Styria: Ex Officina Seccoviensis, 1938), p. 101.

the Anselmian argument is merely a demonstration of existence.

If, however, the character of that of which we have this concept has an essential bearing on the nature of the argument itself, then the demonstration of the existence and the concept around which the demonstration revolves, although both can and should be discriminated, form a unity which is that of the ontological argument. The two things he wishes to show are, as he himself puts it: (1) "to understand that Thou art as we believe" and (2) "that Thou art that which we believe."¹

The Fool of the Psalms who says in his heart that there is no God represents for Anselm the apparent possibility that there is no such idea. It is necessary for Anselm to answer the Fool, for without such an idea, the demonstration would be impossible; but the demonstration depends on our understanding the idea itself. In denying the existence of God, therefore, the Fool must be shown to lack an understanding of the idea of which Anselm has spoken. Does the Fool have the idea itself, however?

The Fool, Anselm says, has said in his heart "there is no God."² This implies that he has a concept present in his mind, for to say in the heart is not the same as to say with the mouth. To say with the mouth is not the same as to have a concept of something, while to say in the heart implies that we do have such a concept.³ Therefore it seems that the Fool does have a concept when he denies the existence of God. Not only has he spoken in the form of words, therefore, but he has a concept as well.

There are, however, two ways in which a thing may be conceived, the distinction between them being based on the object to which he who conceives attends.⁴ One may merely think a thing, or one may think it to be. This is illustrated by the example of the painter who, before he has completed his picture, has a concept of it merely in the first sense. After it is completed, however, it is not only present in his mind as a concept, but he understands that it exists.⁵

¹Ibid. Throughout the body of the text on Anselm and Gaunilo the English translation of S. R. Deane has been used: St. Anselm (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1935).

²Ibid.

³Anselm, Monologion, Opera, p. 25. Cf. pp. 103-4.

⁴Anselm, Proslogion, Opera, p. 103. ⁵Ibid., p. 101.

In the case of the present idea, it is impossible for it to be a concept without our conceiving as well that the thing of which it is a concept exists; for it is a concept of that than which nothing greater can be conceived.¹ To think that than which nothing greater can be conceived, as non-existent, is an unthinkable thought, and therefore not truly a thought at all. The Fool has attended to the words signifying God, but has not attended to the thing signified. What is truly thought, however, requires that we attend primarily to the thing signified, and the Fool in attending only to the name and not the thing has not, therefore, a true concept of that thing; or, as Anselm suggests, he has conceived God by some extraneous concept; but this is the same as to say that it is not a concept proper to the thing of which it is a concept. Had the Fool conceived the thing as well, he could not have denied the existence of God. In denying it, therefore, he has contradicted himself.²

We have shown, thus, that in Anselm's treatment of the Fool, it is a question of a specific concept, i.e., the concept of God, with which he is primarily concerned, and by showing that the Fool's denial of God's existence involves a contradiction, Anselm has shown that the Fool does not possess such a specific concept as is proper to God. The demonstration of existence, therefore, depends on the presence of such a concept, i.e., a concept of a being such that in order to conceive it properly, it is necessary to understand that it exists.

The significance of the proof may be said to reside in the fact that it exhibits a point at which there is effected a union between the knowing mind and the object of its knowledge. Without such a fundamental unity of the mind with being, the proof itself would be impossible. Anselm analyzes being in terms of the notion of creation.³ Since God, by thinking, has created all things, being is said to be intelligible. As intelligible, it is accessible to the mind of the rational creature, who by thinking, participates in being. The rational creature has already present within it an idea of the Creator; and this idea is something. The mind has only to make this something the object of its inquiry in order to know that this something is. It is possible for the mind to abstract from being, or to consider something which is,

¹Ibid., pp. 102-3.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 21-22.

as non-existent; but this is a possibility which presents itself among those things with the being of which there is bound up an element of non-being. This may be designated as the level of the creature, for by a creature Anselm understands that the being of which is contingent (for its existence is not a necessary one); but that whose being is contingent may be considered by the mind not to be.¹

The existence of the Creator, however, is necessary, if we are to conceive Him truly, and therefore it is exclusive of non-being.² It is impossible for the Creator, therefore, to be conceived as non-existent. A point at which the union to which we have referred, i.e., that of the concepts of the knowing mind with the thing which exists outside the knowing mind, is exhibited. This point is to be sought, however, only on the level of the Creator, and not on that of the creature.

Anselm has thus distinguished sharply and carefully between two levels: (1) that of the Creator, and (2) that of the creature. But he distinguishes in a corresponding manner the type of demonstration which operates on the level in which the creature forms the point of departure, and the type of demonstration which moves exclusively on the level of the Creator. The concatenation of many arguments in the Monologion take their point of departure from the level of the creature, whose existence is contingent (per aliud), and proceed in their motion of demonstration to the level of the Creator, whose existence is necessary (per se). The ontological argument of the Proslogion, however, is a single self-sufficient argument (unum argumentum), and deals exclusively with the idea of God, which remains throughout on the level of the Creator. All the proofs in the Monologion begin with an observed truth or fact, and proceed to demonstrate the necessity of God's existence. For example, from the multiplicity of goods which sense and reason reveal to us, and which admit of comparison, the proof proceeds to show the existence of a supreme good which is good through itself, and not through another. The significance of goodness is thus shown to be identical for all the goods which

¹Anselm, Ad Proslogion Responsio Editoris, Opera, p. 131: "Sed quidquid cogitari potest et non est: si esset, posset vel actu vel intellectu non esse."

²Ibid.: "Si vel cogitari potest esse, necesse est illud esse."

exemplify it. In all the demonstrations of the Monologion, the direction has been from the world of creatures (which are per aliud) to the Creator (who is per se) as ground. The multiplicity in the arguments of the Monologion which troubled Anselm when he set out to construct the ontological proof centered around their point of departure.

The ontological argument of the Proslogion begins with the idea of the Creator in the mind of the rational creature, and the argument there derives its purely intellectual character from the fact that it moves entirely on that level, which was achieved only at the end of the several demonstrations in the Monologion. The danger, as Anselm conceives it, lies in the temptation to confuse the nature of the empirical, which is contingent, and for which it is possible not to be, with that whose existence is necessary; likewise, to confuse concepts which are proper to the former with those which are proper only to the latter. This confusion we refer to as a confusion between the level of the creature and that of the Creator. On the level of the Creator, however, we have shown that there is a unique object, i.e., God, with a correspondingly specific concept of Him. Therefore, the argument which moves on that level not only discriminates between that concept and the demonstration of existence of its object, but depends for its demonstrative force on the peculiar character of that concept.

The temptation to turn the discrimination of elements to which we have just referred into a separation is manifested in Gaunilon's opposition to Anselm's demonstration. As a result of this opposition, Anselm was forced to reiterate all the more clearly the need of differentiation of levels between his two types of demonstration. Gaunilon writes in behalf of the Fool an answer to Anselm's attempt to reduce him to silence.

Gaunilon's principal objection is that there are also false concepts to which no object corresponds, so that something might be present in the mind (in intellectu), and yet not in actuality (in re). He does not intend to deny that we can know that something exists, but rather that there is a difference between thought in which there need be nothing corresponding to the concept, and thought which is accompanied by the consciousness of the existence of the thing. If this is so, however, it seems to Gaunilon that Anselm should not have had to distinguish the two,

since it is obviously only the latter in which he is interested. Since, however, there may be a concept of that which is not, then Gaunilon sees no reason why Anselm's concept of God should not submit to the same rules of demonstration as any other concept. If it is unlike other concepts in character, then it is not a concept at all: "and hence I am not able to conceive of it when I hear of it, or to hold it in my concept."¹ There remains according to Gaunilon only one other alternative for Anselm, namely, that it is not a concept, and yet is understood in such a way that its actual existence is already included in our knowledge.

Gaunilon begins with an analysis of Anselm's example of the picture which is said to be a concept in the artist's mind, and to gain actual existence only after it has been put into execution. Anselm assumes that the concept of the picture in the artist's mind is a warrant for its actual execution, and, therefore, that it is a warrant for the existence of the picture itself. If this is so, then, by analogy, the mere concept of the Creator in the mind of the rational creature would guarantee the existence of the Creator. In that case, however, if the principle on which Anselm operates in his demonstration is that the existence of the thing derives from the concept, then the picture evidently has no being from itself, but receives it only when the artist forms a concept of it in his mind. The picture has life, therefore, only as present in the mind of the artist, and as a finished product, i.e., existing outside the mind of the artist it loses this life. As present in the mind of the artist, the picture is nothing but a part of his understanding.²

In the case of the picture itself, therefore, Gaunilon has tried to show that as a minimum, the concept of it and its actual existence are diverse in character. That by actual existence the concept loses its character is, of course, not necessary to his argument against Anselm.

On the other hand, Gaunilon points out that in behalf of the Fool, one could insist against the believer that it is impossible to have any concept at all of the Creator; for as Anselm himself has said, "His reality is such that there can be nothing else like it."³ If we grant this unique character, no comparison can touch it; for if we could understand Him in the same manner

¹Ibid., p. 125.

²Ibid., p. 126.

³Ibid., p. 127.

as we do a man whom we have never seen, He would lose his uniqueness; whereas the essence of any individual man (known or unknown) is understood through the species to which it belongs. Thus, while we may have a concept of a man although the individual answering to the concept may not actually exist, of God no concept at all may be formed, if we accept Anselm's statement that He is of a unique character. It is evident from this that Gaunilon is not concerned here with showing the peculiarity of the concept of God but rather, taking Anselm's description of God literally, and in the same sense as any other description, Gaunilon concludes that at best we might have had of God a concept no different in character from other concepts.

But even that kind of conceptual existence can, if we wish to press Anselm, be denied to God by pushing the distinction between a concept and a word; for if we agree, then, that no concept at all may be formed of God, then there remains only the possibility that when we speak of Him, we use words only. Although the nature of a word differs from that of a concept, yet the word is evidently something, for it has so many syllables. When someone speaks, a vibration is produced in the air, which is called a sound (vox), and on entering the ear of the hearer, it exists there as something heard. This is the kind of existence which we attribute to a word. When the mind acts upon what it hears, and succeeds in grasping the significance of what it hears, a concept is formed. Anselm's characterization of God as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" has indeed the existence of a sound as a physical motion, and an existence in the mind as something heard, but aside from that, Gaunilon will grant it no other kind of existence.¹ Gaunilon has proceeded here to establish his rejection of Anselm's argument, therefore, by pointing to the diversity of nature between a concept and a word. In answer to Anselm's contention that "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" would not be what it is, if it existed merely as a concept, Gaunilon says then, that either there is no concept of it at all, or that if we grant it the being of a concept, it would not follow from its being conceived to exist, that there was actually the thing as well; for existence ascribed by the mind is not equivalent to actual existence.²

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 127-28.

Gaunilon insists, however, that it is only after the mind has succeeded in forming a significant concept that it is relevant to ask whether the thing exists. Granting, therefore (which Gaunilon does not do, of course), that Anselm has shown that there is a concept of God as the most perfect Being, Gaunilon says that he still has to prove the existence of God external to the mind, before Gaunilon will admit that it is an absolute existence.¹

From what he says, it is evident that Gaunilon has divided both Anselm's demonstration and his own refutation of it into two parts, which are not only distinct but separate: "So much for the contention that the supreme nature already exists in my understanding. But that that Being must exist, not only in the understanding but also in reality is thus proved to me. . . ."²

According to Gaunilon, then, prior to the proof of existence, no inference is possible from the mere concept to the necessity of existence outside the mind; for, as a mere concept, the Creator as He is present in the understanding is on the same level as all concepts of contingent things. A contingent existence, however, being one which is subject to doubt and uncertainty, the concept of God does not escape the possibility of such doubt and uncertainty. To illustrate this point, Gaunilon introduces the famous example of the Lost Islands, the fertility of which exceed even that of the Islands of the Blessed.³ The intention of Gaunilon is to carry out a quasi-demonstration of existence of these Lost Islands, parallel to Anselm's demonstration of God's existence. Although these perfectly fertile islands have admittedly only an imaginary existence, yet it is possible to form a conception of them. To have this concept, moreover, it is necessary for the thing to be, since it is more excellent for the thing to be, as well as the concept of it. If, however, for the sake of argument, we assumed, in order to carry out the parallel with Anselm, that these islands existed in the understanding alone, it would be possible to conceive of islands which had actual existence as well; then the same contradiction could be said to exist as in the case of "that than which nothing greater can be conceived."

¹Ibid., p. 128: "Prius enim certum mihi necesse est fiat re vera esse alicubi maius ipsum, et tum demum ex eo quod maius est omnibus, in seipso quoque subsistere non erit ambiguum."

²Ibid., p. 127.

³Ibid., p. 128.

If this parallel is cogent, Gaunilon has succeeded in reducing Anselm's proof to the same level as the proof of existence of the hypothetical islands of perfect fertility. Thus all inference from the concept of God is valid only on the assumption that God exists; but, then, says Gaunilon, in making this assumption part of the proof, Anselm manifestly begs the question. The demonstration of any actual existence should be of something which "exists as a real and indubitable fact, and in no wise as any unreal object, or one whose existence is uncertain in my understanding."¹ This demands, however, that Anselm's concept of God must submit to the same rules of demonstration as any other concept, since a concept for Gaunilon may be of something which does not have actual existence.

Since this is true for Gaunilon, it would seem to follow that if there is a concept of God for him, it is not a unique concept, as Anselm insisted it was. From the concept of God, to argue the impossibility to conceive the thing not to exist, is admissible enough, says Gaunilon; for we merely attribute to it the existence of that which excludes its contrary.² This, however, is merely an assumption, and rather than being demonstrated, it remains problematic throughout.

Gaunilon's mode of argument in this critique of Anselm's demonstration operates, therefore, on the presupposition that there is but one level of thought, on which the diversity in character between concepts of the understanding, and things with actual existence, is essential; a sign of which is the fact that there may be a concept of that which is not. In this sense, Gaunilon's refutation is "correct," and it is characteristic that Anselm's reply to Gaunilon's critique is to find for it its proper place in Anselm's own dialectical scheme.

It is not so much that Gaunilon is in error, according to Anselm, as that, rather, because he has undertaken to represent the standpoint of the Fool, he talks as if what is true of creatures (the lower level of Anselm's dialectics which corresponds to the point of departure of the proofs of the Monologion) is true, as well, of the Creator (the top level of Anselm's dialectic on which the proof of the Proslogion operates exclusively throughout the argument). The ontological proof is not only one (unum)

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 129.

as a proof, but the concept which the demonstration is about, is one as well, for otherwise, in proving that the Creator had Being as a concept, i.e., intelligible Being, and then that He had actual Being, too, it would turn out that we were already dealing with two different things, namely, a concept and a thing. And this is precisely Anselm's grievance against Gaunilon's treatment of his proof.¹

The example of the painter furnishes a striking insight into the difference of approach between Anselm and Gaunilon, for its function is entirely different in each. The painting itself, for Anselm, belongs obviously to the lower level of the creature, in which things are in the process of Becoming; for it requires time in order that the concept in the painter's mind may be translated into an existent thing. It can, therefore, evidently be no more than an analogy for him; and Anselm, when he proceeds to apply it to the concept of "that than which nothing greater can be conceived," shows that we cannot ultimately maintain that this concept is like the concept in the mind of the artist before it has been put into execution. It is rather like the completion of the work, when the concept is that of an existing thing. That it is only an analogy is evident from the fact that Anselm selects only that aspect of the concept of the painting which furnishes a basis for comparison with the concept of the Creator.

It is precisely the temporal aspect which Anselm excludes, and likewise, it is precisely this temporal aspect which Gaunilon includes in his treatment of the painting.

That Anselm is consciously the dialectician is evident if we observe that he does not proceed baldly to lay down the dictum that the presence of something as a concept in the mind is a warrant for the actual presence of the thing. He distinguishes in a painstaking way the presence of something as a concept in the mind, from the knowledge that the thing is as well as the concept. For Gaunilon, however, the use of this example of the painting involves the affirmation that any concept in the mind is a warrant for the actual existence of its object. Therefore, by taking the analogy literally (as Gaunilon does), God would turn out to derive His existence from the activity of the artist, and would cease, therefore, to be the supreme Being. This is an example of the

¹Ibid., p. 131: "Quare si vel cogitari potest, non potest non esse, quo maius cogitari nequit."

manner in which Gaunilon persistently applies a process of reduction of what is true on the level of the Creator, to conditions which are true only on the level of the creature; for if Anselm had meant his example of the artist to be taken literally, Gaunilon's contention that the temporal is necessarily involved in that example would be valid. Thus, after he has said that if there is a concept of the Creator it must be one which comprehends in knowledge the existence of the Creator in reality, Gaunilon goes on to say: "but if this is the case, there will be no distinction between what has precedence in time, namely, the understanding that an object exists, as in the example of the picture which exists first in the mind of the painter and afterwards in his work hence, your example of the painter who already has in his understanding what he is to paint cannot agree with this argument."¹ The terms which Gaunilon uses here are evidence for the point for which we have been arguing, namely, that Gaunilon tends to reduce properties that apply to the Being of the Creator to properties which apply to the temporal Becoming of the creatures. This, at any rate, is how Anselm would interpret what Gaunilon had done to his argument, since to make the temporal thing a means of verifying that which is eternal is for Anselm equivalent to making the creature a measure of the Creator.

The difference of dialectical levels in Anselm between the concept of God and that of the concepts which are of a finite order, in contrast to Gaunilon's reduction of all to one order, is illustrated also in their difference of treatment of Gaunilon's example of the Lost Islands. The idea of an island, Anselm shows, is of a thing which by its essence is in space and time. The concept of that which is created, however, cannot be a concept of what is supremely perfect, for the measure of that perfection is the fact that a concept of it is not truly such, unless it is understood as well that it has objective existence. The concept of an island, however, is by its very nature something which belongs to a given portion of space and its duration is limited to a finite time. It follows from this that it does not exist in all other places or at all the other times. Being divisible, moreover, its parts are different, for one part is not the other part, and the whole is not the part, nor is the part the whole. Since this con-

¹Ad Proslogion Gaunilonis pro Insipiente, Opera, pp. 126-27.

tingent or spatio-temporal, divisible thing which we call an island had in its nature an aspect of non-being, it may be conceived not to be; for its denial conceptually is grounded in the fact that it can not-be. The concept of an island, therefore, does not measure up to the standard of an idea of something supremely perfect.¹ In denying existence to any creature, therefore, the concept of the creature does not cease to be a true concept, for that is precisely what the nature of the creature involves.

The idea of the Creator, however, is an idea of that which is eternal, infinite, and indivisible, for else it could not meet the requirements set by the standard of "that than which nothing greater can be conceived." The same conditions as Gaunilon applied to demonstrating the existence of an island (for Anselm it would be one example of a creature) do not apply, therefore, to the demonstration of the existence of that which is the creative cause of the existence of all creatures. For Anselm, therefore, to say that it is possible to have the concept of the most perfect Being conceivable, would mean that it is possible for the mind to conceive of a Being more perfect than He; but all Being is divided into that which creates, and that which is created. If it were possible, then, for the mind to conceive a Being more perfect than the Creator, that Being would be either a creature, or that which creates. Since we have said, however, that it is more perfect than the Creator, we imply that it is something other than the Creator, and therefore a creature: "For, if a mind could conceive of a being better than Thee, the creature would rise above the Creator; and this is most absurd."²

Gaunilon's strictures would have held, according to Anselm, for creatures, but he has extended them to the Creator as well, and therefore, destroyed the distinction between two different orders of existence. Anselm points significantly in this context to the fact that Gaunilon had substituted the expression "greatest of all" for "that than which nothing greater can be conceived."³

¹Anselm, Ad Proslogion Responsio Editoria, Opera, p. 133: "Si enim posset cogitari non esse, cogitari posset habere principium et finem." Cf. ibid., p. 134: "Illa quippe omnia et sola possunt cogitari non esse, quae initium aut finem aut partium habent coniunctionem....."

²Anselm, Proslogion, Opera, p. 103.

³Anselm, Ad Proslogion Responsio Editoria, Opera, pp. 134-35.

By doing this, Gaunilon weakened the stringency of the proof, and Anselm is quick to observe that without this alteration of expression, the parody of the perfect islands would have been superfluous. This indicates that what disconcerts Anselm in the procedure of Gaunilon is the deliberate reduction of pairs of ideas and the kinds of things of which they are the ideas, which for Anselm had to be sharply discriminated. In finding place, therefore, for such concepts as that of the Lost Islands of Gaunilon, Anselm has been able to fit Gaunilon's entire argument into his own dialectical structure.

We have concentrated until this point on a statement of the position of Anselm and Gaunilon with respect to the concept of God. In the course of this statement we have had occasion to point out that although the idea of God in Anselm's argument, and the demonstration of existence are two distinct elements in the argument, Gaunilon had proceeded to separate them in such a way that there seemed to be no demonstration of existence at all in Anselm. Yet Anselm insists that he is demonstrating the existence of God, for he says at the beginning of his work that he seeks an argument which "alone would suffice to demonstrate that God truly exists."¹ At the end of his proof, he says: "there is, then, so truly a Being than which nothing greater can be conceived to exist, that it cannot even be conceived not to exist; and this Being Thou art, our Lord."² It must be, then, that either Gaunilon is right in denying that Anselm has actually succeeded to demonstrate what he intended, or else that they mean two different things by demonstration. To Anselm it is a question of demonstrating a unique kind of Being, which is at once the principle of discourse, of thinking, and of things.³ The first step of Anselm's demonstration consisted in establishing that God has existence in the sphere of concepts. In the handling of any concepts, however, the fact that we have a determinate concept requires a principle in terms of which we think it. This implies that if there is not to be an endless chain of concepts, and in any particular thought, we assume a thought higher in order than it, then the principle of thought

¹Anselm, Proslogion, Opera, p. 93.

²Ibid., p. 103.

³Anselm, De Veritate, Opera, p. 190: "Considera quia, cum omnes supradictae rectitudines ideo sint rectitudines quia illa in quibus sunt aut sunt aut faciunt quod debent: summa veritas non ideo est rectitudo quia debet aliquid."

itself will be unconditioned. The demonstration of existence of such an unconditioned concept would, therefore, be no ordinary demonstration, generally applicable to all concepts, but only to that peculiar kind of concept that is unconditioned by any other. In analyzing this concept, Anselm shows that its peculiarity consists in the fact that the being of which it is a concept, is transcendent of thinking. This, however, constitutes the second principal step in the demonstration, namely, the exhibition that what is most perfect conceptually exists outside the intellect as well as within it. Outside the intellect, however, there are also things which have a beginning in time, and are bounded in space.

In showing that God has objective existence, Anselm has not yet specified the mode of that existence. Since other things may have such an existence as is external to the mind, Anselm's attribution of such an existence is a minimum desideratum, and the demonstration is not concluded until it has been pointed out what mode of existence is proper to God. This step, however, constitutes the conclusion of the argument. The entire discourse has remained throughout on the level of the idea of the Creator, save for those apparent exceptions where Anselm assumes hypothetically that other elements extraneous to that idea are applicable in order to reduce such assumptions to the absurd; and since that idea was shown to be possible only through the existence of the Creator, and the discourse in turn was possible only because of the existence of the idea, it has turned out that discourse, idea, and existence are inextricably one in the unique case of the Creator.

Gaunilon's notion of demonstration, on the other hand, was a resultant of his separation of discourse, idea, and existence. He says that discourse claims to be, in Anselm's argument, about a certain idea; but this does not mean that there is such an idea, for we may point out words to which no idea corresponds. Similarly, Gaunilon separates idea and existence, as they were implicated in Anselm's discourse, by relegating ideas to that which does not exist; whereas knowledge, for Gaunilon, is of existing things. But just as all concepts belong to the same order for him, so in the question of demonstrating the existence of God, there enter no different considerations from that of testing the existence of any finite, external thing like an island. God's existence, therefore, turns out to be more like that of an imaginary island when we seek to demonstrate its existence than of

something which we know to exist.

To verify the existence of God, however, Anselm turned to the idea itself and analyzed its specific nature, whereas Gaunilon's method of verification was to refer the idea to an external, changing thing like the painting, which has temporal characteristics. The restrictions imposed by the standpoint which Anselm and Gaunilon share are, therefore, such that the demonstration must prove the real, external existence of something. The restrictions which are imposed by Anselm's own systematic conception require that the demonstration prove adequate to the unique idea and being, to which it was devoted; for Gaunilon, however, the demonstration would have to apply to any concept and any thing in general.

The next step in our analysis is one which takes us outside the standpoint shared by Anselm and Gaunilon, to one in which the direction of presentation and rejection with respect to the ontological argument is reversed.

CHAPTER II

KANT

Kant's statement and refutation of the ontological proof take place in the context of his critical examination of knowledge;¹ they must be understood, therefore, in terms of his conception of the nature of knowledge and of the exigencies of demonstration in science. The endeavor to demonstrate existence in connection with the concept of God is proper to the discipline of rational theology, in which it is assumed that we have a science, the object of which is God. There are implicated in the demonstrations of rational theology two aspects, namely, the concept of God and the existence of God as an object. Consequently, the problem with which Kant's critical examination is concerned will be that of the relation between a concept and the existence of a thing.²

The analysis of this problem is equivalent for him to the examination of the nature of knowledge, and of the conditions of scientific cognition. It is the principle of the Critique to discriminate the conditions which apply properly to one field, from those which apply to another, and thus to prevent the surreptitious introduction of elements belonging within the bounds subject to one condition, into a sphere where other conditions obtain.

With respect to each of the spheres which are submitted to critical inquiry, there is a matter peculiar to it, to which matter certain conditions apply in such a way as to make science possible on that level. For example, the matter which is peculiar to the faculty of Sense has two conditions, space and time, which are said to be the forms of sense, since they apply formally to

¹Immanuel Kant, Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, Sämtliche Werke, ed. K. Vorländer (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1922), I, 512-19.

²Kant, An M. Herz, Werke, IX, 100.

³Kant, Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, Werke, I, 31.

the material received by the faculty of sense. By means of these formal conditions it is certified that nothing which is received through our senses will elude the universal scope of space and time.¹ Since everything which is received through the senses must be either in space or time, the necessity of space and time as forms of sense is exhibited. As the necessary and universal forms extending to all phenomena, they are the immediate conditions and modes of ordering the manifold phenomena of sense into a unity.

Knowledge on the level of sense is constituted, thus, by a discrimination of the formal condition from the matter to which that condition applies.² By means of the senses, we receive an effect from something external; but in order that this effect be capable of entering into science, it must have a character which is not recalcitrant to the conditions of science. This character it receives when it has been ordered according to the forms of space and time. The discrimination of the formal and material in sense involves also the difference between the mode of perception and the material character of that which is received from an object without. There are, therefore, determinate forms of sense which apply universally but uniquely to the material aspect of the sensuous level.³

In addition to the spatial and temporal ordering of the data of sense, there is the level of thought, which proceeds in its operation through the various modes of conceptual unification of the manifold phenomena of sense. Not only must there be forms of sense, therefore, but the fact that we think requires that there be forms of thought as well.⁴

The manifold of sense is given from something external. If conceptual unification is to take place, however, it cannot be attained through the forms of sense, which are the forms of reception of that which is given. The forms of thought are the conditions for the active mode of unification, through which the mani-

¹Ibid., p. 89: "Die Zeit ist die formale Bedingung a priori aller Erscheinungen überhaupt."

²Ibid., p. 76: "Da das, worinnen sich die Empfindungen allein ordnen, und in gewisse Form gestellt werden können, nicht selbst wiederum Empfindung sein kann ... die Form derselben aber muss zu ihnen insgesamt im Gemüthe a priori bereit liegen, und daher abgesondert von aller Empfindung können betrachtet werden."

³Ibid., p. 93.

⁴Ibid., p. 107.

fold which is subject to the forms of sense can enter into thought. These forms of thought Kant declares to be the concepts of the understanding, or the categories. As forms of thought, the categories are shown to be that through which we think.¹

The actual assertion that there are categories which are the forms of thought must be shown to involve also that in these categories there is stated the formal structure of scientific knowledge.² It is necessary to demonstrate that the unification of the manifold requires that the forms of thought apply to experience with necessity and universality. When this is done, the categories, which are the forms of thought, are shown to be the forms of knowledge as well.³

The demonstration of the mode whereby the forms of thought are constituted as the forms of knowledge entails two aspects, since it is to reveal the two elements which are ingredients in knowledge. The element of sense, i.e., the aesthetic element, constitutes the material limit to knowledge, for it makes necessary the restriction that only when an object is determined spatially and temporally has it become capable of being known. On the other hand, the intellectual element furnishes the rule which is the formal determination relative to the matter of knowledge. In this way percepts are combined with one another by the understanding according to definite laws.⁴

The deduction of the categories shows that the categories as the formal element in knowledge apply to experience as the material element, with universality and necessity, so that there is a realm of knowledge to which the categories are adequate. The phenomena of sense and the forms which order them are thus shown to be that which is subject to the rules of operation given by the categories. On the other hand, the application of the forms of thought to the phenomenal field is necessary, if the forms of thought are to be the forms of knowing as well.

We have shown that the field of operation of knowledge in Kant is phenomenal. Since sense experience itself does not give us the concepts through which we think, and since the form of thought itself is not phenomenological, the problem is to establish

¹Ibid., p. 130: "Wir wollen diese Begriffe nach dem Aristoteles Kategorien nennen...."

²Ibid., pp. 161-62. ³Ibid., p. 164. ⁴Ibid., pp. 171-72.

the mode in which the categories operate on the phenomenological field. In reaching down to phenomena, the categories are compelled to exercise the determining forms of sense as a means of discovering the existence of what has not yet been experienced. This capacity to represent an object in perception, although it is not present to it, is the faculty of imagination, which by means of space and time brings the representations of sense under the categories, which in turn give us the rules for operating on the material supplied by the imagination. The necessary downward application of the categorical rules to the forms of perception and to the phenomena of sense is determinative of the mode of human knowledge, in which the categories are nailed down, as it were, to the function of synthesis, and synthesis is an ordering of the manifold phenomena of sense.¹

The actual problem, we have said, is concerned with establishing the nature of the relation between the concept and its object, in human knowledge. If knowledge consisted in the mode in which the mind is affected by the object, then it would merely be a picture of something external and there would be no way of ascertaining whether the picture was a true one or not, since the object, being contingent, might cease to exist, and we would not have anything to refer to as a measure of the truth of our concept. Knowledge, therefore, cannot be an effect on the mind, of which an external object is the cause. On the other hand, human knowledge cannot consist in the mind's being the cause, of which the external object is the effect, for then its action would be like the creative activity of the mind of God, which by thinking creates things.² Since human knowledge requires that by means of the senses we receive an effect from something external, it is necessary to distinguish the character of the mind from its object. Although the phenomena of sense are intelligible, yet that which we perceive is not the thing that is, for the reception of an effect from an external source is not equivalent to a contact with the thing that is. The forms of sense, themselves, however, are not derived from sense experience, but only the data of sensuous intuition, and between the form and the data of sense there need

¹Ibid., pp. 128-29.

²Kant, An M. Hertz, Werke, IX, pp. 101-2. Cf. Kant, Werke, I, 100.

be no resemblance. As forms they are rather in the formal mode of perception than in the material mode of that which is received from an object without.¹

On the level of thought, Kant distinguishes between the material mode of conception, in which there is a conformity between the concept and its object, and the formal mode of conception which adds to such a conformity the requisite that the understanding recognizes that there is this conformity between the concept and its object. Since, however, the object of conception and the concept are formally in the mode of the understanding, the necessity and universality in conception of an object spring from the active mode of conceiving proper to the nature of the mind itself.²

There are two possible ways in which the mind may act with respect to its concepts. Either the understanding elaborates an aspect already contained in the concept, in which case the activity is analytic; or it predicates a specific aspect which is not discoverable by any analysis of the subject itself, and this activity of the mind is synthetic. A predicate may, however, be conjoined to its subject-concept in an accidental mode; in that case, the proposition will be synthetic but not a priori. The propositions of a science must not only be synthetic but the mode in which they add to the concept contained in the subject must be universal and necessary. The relation between the concept and its object should be such that by the mind's own nature, propositions are conceived which refer with necessity to the object; and in this case, there is a proper basis for knowledge.³

The guarantee that the forms of sense shall not be confused with forms of thought must reside, however, in something which is neither a form of sense nor a form of thought.⁴ The category of quantity, for example, furnishes the rule whereby a determinate unity is introduced into the temporal series repre-

¹Kant, An M. Hertz, Werke, IX, 101.

²Kant, Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, Werke, I, 152: "Und so ist die synthetische Einheit der Apperception der höchste Punkt, an dem man allen Verstandesgebrauch, selbst die ganze Logik und, nach ihr, die Transcendental-Philosophie heften muss, ja dieses Vermögen ist der Verstand selbst."

³Ibid., pp. 55-59.

⁴Ibid., p. 107: "Beide Vermögen, oder Fähigkeiten können auch ihre Funktionen nicht vertauschen."

sented by number. The operation of drawing a line achieves a synthesis in which there is a passage from part to whole in a transcendental mode, i.e., it is a unity which cannot be apprehended by any amount of empirical observation.¹ If the synthetic unity achieved in this way were that of an aggregate, it would be a whole which arises from the accidental addition of one part to another. Of such a whole the adequate formulation would be a synthetic, a posteriori proposition; but then it could not pertain to science. The unity of science is a systematic unity which is connected by a principle; its propositions are synthetic and a priori.

In this way the different conditions which have been examined critically and assigned each to its distinct sphere become contributory to the systematic function of reason. The unity which is necessary to make science systematic consists in determining the relation of the sciences to one another; it is therefore regulative of the determinative knowledge of the particular unities and of their relation to one another. The unity necessary to make science systematic is a perfect unity, containing in itself all the conditions necessary to knowledge.² If this unity, which validates the application of the categories to phenomena, were not transcendental with respect to the categories and their field of application, it could be represented according to the rules of the understanding; but then it would have to be received into the forms of sense and elaborated as matter for cognition. In that case, the distinction between that which appears in space and time, and that which is, would break down. The unity of reason, being perfect, must therefore reside in something which transcends the actual reach of the understanding, which is restricted to the field of possible experience. The transcendental unity which bestows perfection on science is the property of an idea to which no given object of experience can be adequate, since that which is unconditioned by space and time and by the categor-

¹Ibid., pp. 48-49: "Es kommt hier auf ein Merkmal an, woran wir sicher ein reines Erkenntnis von empirischen unterscheiden können."

²Ibid., p. 337: "Nun geht der transscendentale Vernunftbegriff jederzeit nur auf die absolute Totalität in der Synthesis der Bedingungen, und endigt niemals, als bei dem schlechthin, d.i., in jeder Beziehung Unbedingten."

ies, can never be a term in an empirical synthesis.¹

The idea of reason is therefore necessary to direct the understanding and the relation of its concepts to the object, in such a way that the concepts formally constitute knowledge. In order to be properly regulative, however, this idea must allow for a discrimination of the conditions which furnish the elements of knowledge; hence these principles themselves cannot be subject to knowledge, since then there would be no way in which the forms of sense and the forms of thought could be discriminated. The distinction between the phenomenal, which is subject to knowledge, and the noumenal, which is not, is essential, therefore, to the entire critical enterprise.

The noumenal is not a form of cognition, like the concepts of the understanding, for it does not refer to an object in such a way as to determine it to representation. The ideas of reason, as noumena, are heterogeneous from the categories of the understanding.² The concepts of the understanding operating on the manifold phenomena of sense are the formal mode of unifying the matter which is furnished to it by the forms of sense. There is therefore a condition to the activity of the categories, i.e., that there be given a material of which the formal categorical rules may be determinative. The idea, being regulative of this formal determination, cannot be subject to the condition to which the categories, as forms of knowing, are subject.³ The principle of perfection which is required by knowledge, containing the absolute unity of conditions, is therefore of a noumenal rather than a phenomenal character.

Applying the critical distinction of the noumenal and the phenomenal to the problem of establishing the relation between concept and object, we can express that relation as follows: the concept, which is formally determinative of knowledge, is regulated in its relation to the object of knowledge in such a way that knowledge cannot be reduced to an effect by the object on the mind; for in that case the concept could not be distinguished from that which is actually given; as a result, the form and the matter

¹Ibid., pp. 337-38.

²Ibid., p. 338.

³Ibid., pp. 337-38: "Denn die reine Vernunft überlasst alles dem Verstande, der sich zunächst auf die Gegenstände der Anschauung....bezieht."

of knowledge would be confounded. The principle which is regulative of knowledge, since it contains in itself all conditions, by means of the forms of thought and the forms of sense, introduces the determinations and restrictions which constitute the nature and requisites of knowledge. It is therefore the means by which it is certified that the form and matter of knowledge will not be confused.

The possibility of critical examination requires that the activity of examining be not subject to the determinations which are proper to what is examined by it, for in recognizing these bounds, it can see that something lies beyond them; whereas within these bounds certain restrictions are operative on each of the levels which have been examined. In rational theology, however, it is assumed that we have a science of the ideal. It is precisely the character of science which Kant refuses to it, when he says that its procedure results in a dialectical illusion. As a science, rational theology is concerned with a certain kind of concept and a form of demonstration which it connects with this concept. It attempts to demonstrate that existence is connected with the idea of God.¹

There are, however, two types of demonstration of God's existence according to Kant. One he characterizes as a spontaneous natural procedure which has in it a corrigible dialectic; the other, which is connected with the ontological proof, has an incorrigible dialectic. Neither form of rational theology is valid as demonstration, but that which has in it a corrigible dialectic, although it is not demonstrative, does less damage to the idea of God itself.²

The ontological argument has in it an incorrigible dialectic, because it endeavors to prove of God a categorical existence. This, however, would upset the whole direction established in the deduction of the categories, which showed that the application of

¹Ibid., p. 503.

²The incorrigibility is based on the fact that it is entirely speculative. Ibid., p. 542: "Eine theoretische Erkenntnis ist speculativ, wenn sie auf einen Gegenstand oder solche Begriffe von einem Gegenstande geht, wozu man in keiner Erfahrung gelangen kann." Cf. ibid., p. 543: "Ich behaupte nun, dass alle Versuche eines bloss speculativen Gebrauchs der Vernunft in Ansehung der Theologie gänzlich fruchtlos und ihrer inneren Beschaffenheit nach null und nichtig sind...."

the forms of knowing is necessarily downward to the forms of perception and to the manifold phenomena of sense. To demonstrate categoreal existence as connected with the idea of God would turn an idea of reason into an object of knowledge; but in that case the categories would have to be turned upwards to apply to the idea of God.¹ Kant's critique of the ontological proof exhibits the consequences of such an endeavor, first with respect to the character of the idea itself, and second with respect to whether the purported proof actually satisfies the conditions of demonstration.

The idea of God as that of a perfect or absolutely necessary being is unlike other concepts, for it is an idea of something unconditioned.² The other concepts, on the contrary, have as objects something which is conditioned, since these objects are subject to categoreal rules. Thus the concept of causality applies to all phenomena, which are strictly linked up in a necessary chain of cause and effect. If, therefore, the idea of God were like other concepts, that of which it is an idea would be conditioned and it would cease to be the principle of perfection.

As the principle of perfection, moreover, the idea of God is something that is comprehensive of all that is real, and can contain, therefore, no negation, if by negation we mean that which denies a reality to something.³ The ordinary concepts, however, are combined in judgments, some of which are affirmative, and others negative. The idea of God, therefore, is either not a concept at all, if we confine the conceptual character to the categories, or else it is a concept of a peculiar and unique character.⁴ It is distinguished from the concepts of the understanding

¹Ibid., p. 544. "Denn alle synthetischen Grundsätze des Verstandes sind von immanentem Gebrauch, zu der Erkenntniss eines höchsten Wesens aber wird ein transscendenter Gebrauch derselben erfordert, wozu unser Verstand gar nicht ausgerüstet ist."

²Ibid., pp. 501-2: "Das Ideal ist ihr also das Urbild (Prototypen) aller Dinge, welche insgesamt, als mangelhafte Kopien (ectypa), den Stoff zu ihrer Möglichkeit daher nehmen, und indem sie demselben mehr oder weniger nahe kommen, dennoch jederzeit unendlich weit daran fehlen, es zu erreichen."

³Ibid., p. 502.

⁴Ibid., pp. 502-3. "Vielmehr würde der Möglichkeit aller Dinge die höchste Realität als ein Grund und nicht als Inbegriff zum Grunde liegen...."

through the fact that it is singular in character, whereas ordinary concepts are universal. This is not sufficient, however, to distinguish the idea of God from the forms of sense, since space and time, being intuitive, are also singular. Space and time have as the matter given to them the contingent appearances which are in constant flux. The idea of God, on the other hand, is unique because it furnishes the standard of perfection to knowledge and cannot, therefore, contain anything contingent.

Moreover, this idea of perfection is not, says Kant, a figment of the mind arbitrarily formed by it, but it is a necessity of reason which seeks to answer the strictures of the sceptic by discovering something which is not conditioned.¹ The universal which is formed by the understanding, on the other hand, in synthesizing the manifold of perceptions into an object, is in a certain sense a relative whole, for although under it are subsumed less general wholes, it itself may be subsumed under successively higher genera, the limit of the process being an absolutely universal unity. The unity which is formed by the categories of the understanding out of the data furnished by experience is conditioned by the union of its parts, for experience exists in space and time, both of which admit of infinite divisibility. Moreover, the truth furnished by understanding is intrinsically a conditioned truth, since the judgment which expresses it is true only on the condition that a judgment other than it is true, from which judgment it is inferred. Since the judgment which conditions it has in turn a validity based on a further judgment, the process of the understanding would go on indefinitely unless there were a principle which is not conditioned by anything further. It is therefore a necessity of the mind to discover an idea which is so constituted that it escapes the limitations of both phenomena and of the concepts which apply to them.²

The idea of God is therefore a necessary idea, and as an idea, it is not subject to dialectical illusion unless we connect with it the status of objective existence. The attempt to demonstrate that God exists from the idea that we have of Him is there-

¹Ibid., pp. 503-4. "...denn das Ideal, wovon wir reden, ist auf einer natürlichen und nicht bloss willkürlichen Idee gegründet."

²Ibid., pp. 492-93.

fore what is subject to the critique, whereas the idea of God continues to operate after the whole of rational theology has been dealt with. The criticism of the ontological argument proceeds on the basis that in it the idea of God is on a level with all other concepts. This is not, however, because Kant himself thinks that this is actually true, but precisely because he believes that implicating the idea of God in a demonstration reduces it to a level on which its unique character is destroyed; and it is at this reduction principally that the refutation is aimed.

Although the concept of a necessary being is admittedly a concept, the question is whether it is a concept of anything, for in order that there be knowledge, there must be an object as well as a concept. But the ontological proof insisted on restricting itself to the concept alone, excluding all other admixture. In that case, its character is purely logical, i.e., it has conceptual being, in the sense that it does not violate the principle of contradiction. The idea of the supreme being does not contain a contradiction, for since it is an idea of that which comprehends all reality, it excludes negation and contradiction. From this it is valid to conclude that the idea of a supreme being is a possible one.¹

The ontological argument argues, however, that what comprehends all reality comprehends existence as well, and that since the ideal of reason does this, it necessarily exists.² The argument assumes, therefore, the form of a demonstrative syllogism of which the major premise affirms that the supreme being, since it is perfect, contains all possible attributes; the minor premise adds that existence is an attribute; and the conclusion is that the supreme being exists. But this implies that there is something in the concept that can cause existence, since the existence of God is contained in or proved by means of the idea of God which we admittedly possess.³

To be an attribute, however, more is required than the analysis of the subject in which what is implicit in the term de-

¹Ibid., pp. 512-13.

²Ibid., p. 513.

³Ibid., p. 515: "Ich antworte: Ihr habt schon einen Widerspruch begangen, wenn ihr in den Begriff eines Dinges, welches ihr lediglich seiner Möglichkeit nach denken wolltet, es sei unter welchem versteckten Namen, schon den Begriff seiner Existenz hinein brachtet."

defined is made explicit; an attribute must add other characteristics not contained in the subject. The word "is," used in actuality, is the copula of a proposition, so that to say that "God is" does not attribute another predicate to the concept of God. It would seem, then, that the ontological argument falls short of the condition of demonstration which requires that its propositions be synthetic in character; at best it exhibits a logical rather than a real use of reason, for although it is conceded that its propositions are universal and necessary, they do not add anything to the concept contained in the subject. In that case, the argument turns out to be more like a definition, since in it the purported major premise and conclusion are identical, rather than a demonstration in which something not already contained in the definition of the subject is deduced.

If, however, it is meant that among the number of conceivable properties, the property of existence also belongs, then it is necessary to prove that, in general, existence may be considered as a property or attribute. Although Kant has shown reasons for believing that it is not an attribute, yet, granting that it is possible to consider it thus, as the proponents of the present argument do, it is necessary to have evidence for ascribing existence to that particular thing to which other attributes are attributed. There is essential, then, a separate proof that existence actually belongs to the thing in question.¹

Therefore it follows that when we say that the idea of the perfect or of that which has in it all possible attributes contains the attribute of existence, we do one of two things. Either we attribute existence to the idea in such a way as to make of that idea something which does not exist outside the mind, i.e., an ens rationis, or a merely conceptual existence; or we intend that it exists actually outside the mind, and possesses the properties which we have attributed to it in our proposition. In the former case, however, the question which was meant to be proved is not answered, for the intention of the argument was to prove that there exists outside the mind an absolutely necessary and perfect being. In the latter case, in order to show that there is actually an extra-mental existence besides the conceptual existence of the subject in the proposition, either some other method

¹Ibid., p. 516.

must be employed to exhibit the mode of existence required, or the ontological proof must itself be the mode whereby the existence is caused, for it has set out deliberately to prove the existence of an a priori concept alone.

On the one hand, the proof undertakes to set out from a pure concept and to preserve the purity of the concept. On the other hand, since it purports to be demonstrative, it must show that the concept has an objective content; hence it must demonstrate something other than the concept itself. If it is with a pure concept that we are dealing, then we may in our idea of the supreme being remove existence by removing the entire object. By negating the subject itself, it is no longer a contradiction to remove its attributes along with it, for a concept is a logical entity.

All that is required for us in order to have a concept is to show that it is logically possible; but from this it follows that its object may be a contingent one, and may therefore not exist. If the object of a concept may be contingent, however, it is permissible to conceive of it as non-existent, for, as Kant says, "logic pays no attention to the content of a judgment; it abstracts from all content."¹ In this sense, he declares that existence is not a real predicate, since "the determination of a concept is a predicate which adds to and enlarges the meaning of a subject." It may, however, be a logical predicate, for a logical predicate may be predicated of itself. The necessity of a logical demonstration has merely a conjectural status in an actual science. Logic is not concerned with real necessity but with necessity of inference, and consequently a logical necessity is no more than the possibility of existence.

At this juncture Kant introduces the example of the concept of one hundred dollars, the existence of which in actuality adds nothing to the concept. This example is intended to bear out the contention that a conceptual definition is not equivalent to a demonstration of existence.

Now if I think of something as the highest reality, without any defect or imperfection, the question still remains whether this being exists or not. For although no element is lacking in a possible content of my conception, there is a defect in its relation to my mental state, since I do not know whether the cognition of the object is possible a posteriori.²

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 517-18.

Evidently the consideration here involves a discrimination between the knowing mind with its mental states, on the one hand, and on the other hand, there is the object to be known.

When it is a question of an object of perception, there are definite criteria enabling the mind to keep the concept distinct from the existence of an object. The concept alone, however, is a form of thought, through which no determinate object can be known; in order that the existence of an object may be introduced into our knowledge, it must be connected by means of empirical laws with at least one perception. The concept furnishes a rule which "merely enables me to think it as conforming with the general conditions of experience, while the existence of the object permits me to think it as contained in the sphere of actual experience."¹

When, however, it is a question not of an object of perception there are no longer any criteria for distinguishing existence from possibility. All we can apply to the idea as an object is the categoreal scheme, for the idea can only be known, if at all, in an a priori mode. Since the possibility of knowing an existent object is a posteriori, belonging as it does to the unity of experience, and since what is thought in a concept is thought independently of experience, then including objective existence in the formation of the concept would lead to the confusion of that which is known independently of experience (a priori), and that which is accessible only through experience (a posteriori).²

This would involve, however, the breakdown of the distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenological, and as a consequence, between the form and the matter of knowledge. The ontological argument in applying the form of knowing to the idea of God reduces it to the level of the manifold of sense; but in that case, that which is regulative of knowledge ceases to be regulative if we apply the categoreal form to it.³

¹Ibid., p. 518.

²Ibid., pp. 545-46: "...und ich halte mich daher an der einzigen billigen Forderung, dass man sich allgemein und aus der Natur des menschlichen Verstandes samt allen übrigen Erkenntnisquellen darüber rechtfertige, wie man es anfangen wolle, sein Erkenntnis ganz und gar a priori zu erweitern und bis dahin zu erstrecken, wo keine mögliche Erfahrung und mithin kein Mittel hinreicht, irgend einem von uns selbst ausgedachten Begriffe seine objective Realität zu versichern."

³Ibid., p. 549: "Ich behaupte demnach: die transscen-

The concept of existence exercises its function in the construction of a field of knowledge. In the construction of that field, the concept is the act of construction itself. If, therefore, existence is attributed to God, God will necessarily be constructed in experience and become an object of experience. But this evidently contradicts His absolute character. Therefore the argument, in setting out to prove the existence of God from His perfection, ends by removing that perfection itself from Him.¹

The ontological argument, as Kant interprets it, depends on the possibility of conceiving God as an object of cognition, and it is this possibility that has been submitted to critical examination. Kant has shown that it involves going beyond the bounds of possible experience and introducing surreptitiously the forms of sense and the forms of thought in order to give to the idea of God the semblance of an object of knowledge. The idea of God itself has not been submitted to a critique, therefore, but rather the demonstration which reduces its status as an ideal to that of a phenomenological object. Such a procedure as is involved in the ontological argument has been rejected by Kant, because it tends to upset the entire direction which he considered essential to the structure of this philosophy. For that reason he has found its dialectic incorrigible.

The proper constitution of philosophy establishes the ideas of reason as regulative and is architectonic, furnishing a plan which is suitable to a system of pure philosophy. By means of such a plan, pure reason is said to be rendered unconditionally practical, thus making possible that which had become an inevitable conflict in the theoretic context. Theoretically, the human mind, directed towards the finite objects of experience, exhibits an imperfection in range and mode of operation, since it has shown itself unable to grasp the totality of its object in a single intuition, but must proceed in a finite manner from part to part. The danger to be avoided was that of carrying over the finite character of the things which man grasps by his representative forms, into the infinite which is inaccessible to his knowledge.

dentalen Ideen sind niemals von constitutivem Gebrauche, so dass dadurch Begriffe gewisser Gegenstände gegeben würden, und in dem Falle, dass man sie so versteht, sind es bloss vernünfteln (dialektische) Begriffe."

¹Ibid., pp. 549-50.

Thus, where the infinite is of a moral or theological character, and the finite is physical, there is a heterogeneity which makes evident the inadequacy of the human intellect with respect to the absolute or internal possibility of things; consequently, the ideal of reason is not within the power of our forms of knowing.¹

The absolute ideal, which reason cannot render an object of knowledge, can be realized by it, however, in its moral activity. If this is so, the defect is not that of reason itself but of the theoretic position, which endeavors to find the absolute as an object which confronts it, but which is not subject to its determination. On the other hand, if in its practical activity the ideas of reason can determine the will, pure reason will be shown to be practical. This would signify not that the ideas of reason are at one time rejected and then reinstated, but that they are given their proper function.²

The significance of practical reason is that it establishes the ideas as regulative, thus preventing the material element (the sensible) from upsetting the formal element (the intellectual). The ideas, when functioning properly, are regulative and directive of science, the form of which is constituted by the categoreal framework, which is intellectual in character. Under practical reason, therefore, the sensitive cannot upset the intellectual. If it does so, we have the pathological condition of reason, and then reason is not practical, i.e., philosophy is not functioning properly.

The philosophic measure which is requisite to Kant's critical procedure has involved, therefore, a need for discriminating between the noumenal and the phenomenal, and as a consequence of this, between the theoretic and practical use of reason. It has turned out that philosophy is properly constituted when the noumenal is directive of the phenomenological. The critical measure in its negative aspect, which Kant calls the discipline of pure reason, has served to prevent the improper use of reason in its theoretic capacity, appealing to the objective significance of

¹Ibid., pp. 467-68.

²Ibid., p. 567: "Die Ideen der reinen Vernunft können nimmermehr an sich selbst dialektisch sein, sondern ihr blosser Missbrauch muss es allein machen, dass uns von ihnen ein trügerischer Schein entspringt...."

the categories in order to avert the strictures of the sceptic.¹ In its positive aspect, the critical measure is said to be a canon in that it exhibits the proper function of reason.² The significance of this is that when the critical measure is properly directive, the formal element is determinative of the material element. Since, thereby, the contingent object cannot any longer cause the ideal character of the noumenal to degenerate and assume a phenomenal character, the canon is said to be practical.³

In a practical context, therefore, the mind, having been liberated from the restriction of phenomena, can make the ideas of reason its objects without the danger of causing those ideas to degenerate into objects of experience.⁴ The idea of God, as the object of practical reason, can then be said to have an existence which is not categorial, but noumenal. As an object of practical reason, God can no longer be considered an external object given to the senses, for the objects of reason in its practical function, being the end or final cause of our ethical activity, must be intemporal and unconditioned. In a sense, therefore, the predicate of a noumenal proposition adds something which is not contained in the concept of the subject, for it enables us to extend our action and hence is synthetic rather than analytic in character.⁵

Moral thought requires that its object be eternal and immutable and it is, therefore, not subject to the conditions of space and time. Voluntary action, which is within our power, may be said to be constituted by an ideal of reason and in respect that it is, it, too, will be unrestricted by the conditions of space and time. A practical demonstration of the existence of God as the norm of practical reason is possible because, when reason is directed practically, the ideal may be conceived to exist, without ceasing to be ideal.⁶

After the critical examination by means of which philosophy becomes the careful direction of the enterprise of knowledge and

¹Ibid., p. 659.

²Ibid., p. 660.

³Ibid., p. 662.

⁴Kant, Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft, Werke, II, 1.
Note Kant's refutation in anticipation of the tradition established by Schopenhauer, namely, that Kant was obsessed by a love of symmetry.

⁵Ibid., pp. 179-40.

⁶Ibid.

of morals, it is evident that it has been necessary for Kant to reject the ontological argument as destructive of the distinctions essential to the proper direction of that philosophy. One of the successors of Kant, therefore, has said rightly that the whole critique of reason is in a sense only a critique of the ontological argument.¹

The philosophical measure to which Kant appealed, in accordance with which he rejected the ontological argument, resides, as we tried to show, in the distinction of phenomena and noumena. This distinction, however, is not one between two different kinds of things, but springs from the different ways in which the mind is related to things. Since for Kant there is no way in which a concept may be related to an object, whereby the existence of the object would follow, the attempt in rational theology to demonstrate the existence of God is invalid. The restriction in Kant is contained, therefore, in the nature of the concept as the form of knowledge. In Anselm and Gaunilon, however, it is a question concerning a difference of existing things in a real world, and the restriction there would be contained in the character of the thing to which the concept applied. Thus Gaunilon's rejection of the argument implied that there was only one kind of thing to which a concept could apply, namely, external objects in the process of generation and corruption. This, Anselm was quick to point out, was equivalent to resolving the characters proper to the creator into those which are proper to the creature.

That Kant's procedure can hardly be accused of such a resolution as Gaunilon's is evident not only from his painstaking differentiation of phenomena and noumena, but from the motive which actuated him in rejecting the ontological proof, namely, that in it the unique character of the idea was lost. But the proper character of the idea of God consists in its being the supreme principle of knowledge and of morals, and this implies that the conditions of time and space do not apply to it. Consequently it is only by leaving out the critical machinery that it is possible

¹Karl Daub, Philosophische und Theologische Vorlesungen, ed. Marheineke and Dettenberger (Berlin, 1838-44), II, 417, 436. For the importance of rejecting the ontological proof in Kant, cf. Über der Fortschritte der Metaphysik seit Leibniz und Wolf, Werke, V, 128-65; and Was heisst: sich im Denken orientieren? Werke, V, 152-53.

to identify Kant's rejection with that of Gaunilon. This machinery, however, is directed by the philosophic end toward which it is ordered; therefore, such an identification would resolve an argument which is philosophic in character into a term of historical comparison which is indifferent to the philosophic basis underlying that which it submits to comparison.

CHAPTER III

HEGEL

In re-introducing the ontological argument into philosophy, Hegel calls attention to the break which had been occasioned by Kant's critical rejection of it.¹ The upward movement of the mind from sense toward the ideas of reason is admittedly for Kant a necessity for the mind, but since the categories in their relation to the forms of intuition are determinative of knowledge, this necessary movement does not belong to the formal structure of knowledge itself. Hence, there can be for Kant no science of ideas. As a result of these critical strictures, the mind has withdrawn from science itself and has concentrated on the needs of the heart and faith; and philosophy, separated from science, has become a kind of edification.²

The endeavor to re-introduce the ontological demonstration faces a difficulty; for, as Hegel says, one aspect of the argument seems to refer back to logic, involving as it does the character of demonstration; the other aspect, which constitutes its specific subject-matter, refers to theology. The effect which the critical refutation had produced was therefore not a simple one, for, on the one hand, criticism had ended by excluding the proof from the field of scientific method, but, on the other hand, theology rejected all demonstration as abstract and discursive. Thus, although the subject of the proof might evoke a favorable response in theological circles, the fact that it purports to be demonstrative discourages the mind which anticipates edification.

¹Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes, Philosophie der Religion, ed. Georg Lasson (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1929), Part III, p. 2.

²Ibid., p. 3. Throughout the body of the text on Hegel, quotations have been made from the English translation by E. B. Speirs and J. B. Sanderson: Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co. Limited, 1895), Vol. III.

Concerning the proofs of God, therefore, instead of faith seeking understanding, faith and understanding have become contraries.¹ The understanding has come to deny the possibility of a method through which the proofs of God can be made acceptable scientifically. Faith, on the other hand, having been excluded from understanding, has set up its own criteria for truth, measured by which the understanding seems abstract and its method inadequate to that truth of faith; consequently faith lays claim to an immediacy of knowledge which it holds to be superior to the formal, mediative activity of the understanding. As immediate, however, faith assumes the form of a thesis in which is posited a firstness which is opposed to the progression of steps in demonstration.

Through a peculiar dialectics the relative positions of understanding and faith have become altered, the difference between them having been pushed to the point of contradiction. For Hegel a meaningless abstraction has entered into science, its mediative activity having been deprived of something immediate on which it can operate. As a result of its exclusion of faith, science has become merely a formal type of organization, unable to justify the formal relations by means of reference to a content or an individual nature. Faith, as the result of the liberation of science from it, is itself free of science and cannot, therefore, seek to understand itself. Because of this separation, the question of the demonstration of the existence of God assumes a more complex character than it had when faith and understanding were not extremes.²

In the philosophy of Anselm, where faith and thought were both present without contradiction, there was a synthesis of both; but when thought liberated itself from its connection with faith, thought posited itself as its own presupposition. Hegel indicates that his own standpoint requires a method which will be unitive of understanding (science) and faith (theology), by maintaining that the understanding, in positing itself as its own presupposition, becomes, in turn, the result or conclusion of the prior union of faith and understanding; that is to say, there must have been a synthesis of both which had entered later. Understanding involves a presupposition equally on the standpoint in which it is regarded as its own presupposition, and on the standpoint in

¹Ibid., pp. 8-10.

²Ibid., p. 10.

which it has the synthesis of faith and understanding as its presupposition. In the former case, that which is understood is immediate, whereas in the latter case, faith is presupposed as immediate. In either case, there is that which is potentially the understanding of itself, and the actuality of understanding is a demonstration of this exigency of thought.¹

The antithetic relation between faith and knowledge is reduced philosophically to an analysis of the relation between the immediate and mediation. That which faith claims to have immediately as its object, however, is an unconditioned or infinite idea; but of this idea the understanding can have no knowledge. Therefore, if there is to be "a necessary insight into the nature of that which is to be vouched for by our proof," there must be exhibited in it a transcendence of the bounds set by the understanding to knowledge.²

For Kant, however, the categoreal framework which is essential to the formal structure of science, imposes restrictions which are necessitated by the nature of human intelligence; thus, the resultant knowledge is of a universal character, and not individual. Therefore, although according to Kant there is a natural motion of the mind upward from sense to reason, which seeks to find at the top something which is unexceptionable for the mind, there is a danger concealed in this transition. Thus, when instead of merely ending with the idea of reason, the mind begins a demonstration, there arises "the unfortunate ontological argument" in which the idea of God is wrongly made dialectical. For Hegel, on the other hand, this passage is not only a natural one, but the essence of the philosophic method for him is to demonstrate that the forms of the understanding are transcended by an idea with which existence is necessarily connected: a process which implies that the Idea for Hegel is dialectical in character.³

The discursive understanding is concerned primarily with the determination of being through the categories; but it reasons as if the categories were ultimate. The standpoint of the under-

¹Ibid., p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 14.

³Hegel, Encyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse, Werke, ed. Marheineke et al. (2d ed.; Berlin, 1843), VI, 17. "....die Natur des Denkens selbst die Dialektik ist...."

standing represents for Hegel that extreme which takes the being of finite things to be ultimate.¹ From its procedure there results a division into that which can be comprehended by the categories, and that which, being transcendental, cannot be comprehended by them. Since the understanding takes its determinations as ultimate, the transcendental has for it no being; therefore, if the being of perfect unity is to be comprehended, the restrictions imposed by the Kantian categorial scheme cannot be ultimate, and a method must be devised whereby it is shown how in a most comprehensive sense the categorial scheme breaks down.

The unity of the understanding is according to Hegel a unity of essentially different contents which it holds in isolation from each other, "but so they are not considered truly."² The determinations which it takes to be fixed and ultimate "strike over into their opposites" and must be handled by a higher faculty capable of treating them dialectically.³ The dialectical method is exhibited when it is shown that as soon as we can bring into the ken of the mind anything which seems impossible to the machinery of the understanding, the finite may be said to transcend itself. This movement of transcendence is made necessary by Hegel's conception of philosophy and of the demonstration which is appropriate to philosophy.

In Kant we have shown that there is possible no theoretic knowledge of things in themselves but that at the peak of theory there is the idea of something which is not conditioned by space and time, and which, though incapable of being known by means of the theoretical concept, sets boundaries to the function of understanding. Of this idea of the supreme being there is, however, a practical cognition. In Kant, although the idea binds together the theoretic and the practical, it does not do so dialectically, since the criticism of reason in its theoretic use is the practical use of reason. In Kant, therefore, the practical and the theoretic cannot be merged without destroying the peculiar direction necessary to philosophy.

In Hegel, however, since philosophy consists in demonstrating that the necessity of the knowing mind is a necessity of things as well, the Idea merges the theoretic and practical in a dialectic-

¹Ibid., pp. 146-47.

²Ibid., p. 147.

³Ibid., p. 151.

tical manner.¹ The Idea in Hegel is an active power of mind which is demonstrative of the existence of its content. Thus, the procedure which involved for Kant an "incorrigible dialectics" is for Hegel the natural motion of the mind, for "we have only to look to its own process and we have there, since it is necessity itself, the necessary insight into the nature of that which was to be vouched for by our proof."² The necessary determinations of the categories in knowledge, for Kant, become, for Hegel, limits to be overcome, and the whole critique becomes a phenomenology of mind, the critical restrictions and distinctions being a sign of something finite and imperfect. There could not, however, be a criticism of the finite unless there were an idea of an infinite being. Therefore, by subjecting finitude to a dialectical critique there is demonstrated in Hegel the necessity of an infinite being.

The finite is that which is determined within the categorical scheme, and its finitude thus involves negation or exclusion. The idea of the perfect or infinite, however, cannot be delimited in this way. When it is juxtaposed with the perfection of an absolute idea, that which is categorically determined manifests a distortion or discrepancy.³ The problem is to mediate between a perfect unity and an imperfect many, by means of a process in which neither extreme will be destroyed. At one extreme, we have the idea of a God whose being would be destructive of the being of finite things; at the other extreme, there is the idea of finite things which would be destructive of the being of God. If we take either extreme in a univocal sense, the result is that no mean will be possible between them, except by equivocation or contradiction. If, however, we treat them analogically, the apparent contradiction would be resolved by a method of synthetic reduction. The method which enables us to steer between both extremes is, as Plato says, the proportion which is best adapted to secure such a fusion. By such a method "the extremes are the distinctions, and the mean is the identity which in a supreme degree makes them one."⁴

¹Ibid., p. 408: "Die absolute Idee ist zunächst die Einheit der theoretischen und der praktischen Idee...."

²Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Beweise, p. 14.

³Ibid.

⁴Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie,

According to such an interpretation, the categoreal determinations become hypotheses or analogic ways of approximating a truth which is itself not categoreal. Thus, the act of the understanding which posits the idea as an object makes it a thesis which can be surpassed dialectically. That which can be surpassed, however, cannot be infinite, since it has something antithetic to it at the other extreme.¹ But if we treat our extremes as thesis and antithesis, it becomes impossible for us to say that the perfect unity, and the many things which are perceptible or reducible to concepts, both have being. If, however, there is to be a science of the idea, as Hegel contends there is, then there must be some way in which to determine the Idea. Therefore, the determinative act of the understanding becomes itself one part of the dialectical process.²

We begin, in Hegel, not with a plurality of subject-matters, categoreally determined, but Pure Being, which is indeterminate, is the starting-point for absolute knowledge.³ The problem is how the absolute can begin without becoming finite. Being first, it cannot have a determination in opposition to an other, nor can it have any content, since then there would be differentials and the relation of differentials to one another. When we say that something is, therefore, there is no univocal way of interpreting this statement, since then it would be necessary to specify the respect in which it is; but this is impossible here, since specification and respect are possible only within a categoreal scheme. If by Being we mean to be in a respect, and respect is determined by reference to a categoreal scheme, then Pure Being may be said not to be. If, however, that which transcends the categoreal scheme somehow is, then the mode in which the categoreal is transcended must be exhibited.

We have said that there is in Pure Being no difference or division; but it is by unity that we signify absence of division. When it is said, therefore, that Pure Being is not, it is indicated elliptically that it has a unity which is not in the sense of something which is divided by the categories. The One is not in the

Werke, ed. K. L. Michelet (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1842), XIV, 221.

¹Hegel, Encyklopädie, p. 56.

²Ibid., p. 152.

³Ibid., p. 165.

sense in which the Many is, and so, when the unity of Pure Being, as equivalent to that which is not, is said not to be, then there is a sense in which the division which it negates, is. By a mixture of Being and Non-being, then, we get Becoming, by which something which is generated or comes into being can be accounted for. With respect to Pure Being, moreover, the mind is perfectly passive, for Pure Being has no determination. In this sense, it is only when determination enters that empty being becomes something, for in bringing about a delimitation, that which is becomes intelligible to the mind.¹

The entrance of delimitation is likewise accompanied by a corresponding determination in the mind. The movement of the mind which Hegel calls phenomenological, represents a growth in the organizing capacity of the mind. In seizing the external impressions which enter it, the mind unifies them as its material. The movement proceeds from that point in which the mind, being more and more affected by something external, has a confused, cloudy apprehension of the material, to that point in which it has a concept and its mode of apprehension has become clear. With respect to the mind, determination signifies the entrance of finite percepts into a concept which was first empty in the manner in which Pure Being was said to be empty. In the degree that the mind actively works over its material, the concept partakes more and more of the nature of the mind and less of that which is external.²

This active power of the mind is what Hegel calls the concrete universal, the principle of all immanent connection.³ Immanent connection involves not merely the connection of a logical inference, but it is a principle for the whole organization of life. The concrete universal fuses a manifold of elements into a unity; it is the principle whereby all finite things individually transcend themselves.⁴ In this way, the elements which are taken by the understanding to be fixed, lose their self-identity and become parts of an organic unity.

The active power of the mind is, therefore, that principle of unity, in virtue of which that which is divided by the separa-

¹Ibid., pp. 175-76: "Das Werden ist der erste konkrete Gedanke, und damit der erste Begriff, wohingegen Seyn und Nichts leere Abstraktionen sind."

²Ibid., p. 60.

³Ibid., p. 152.

⁴Ibid., pp. 154-55.

tive and abstractive activity of the understanding ceases to be disconnected, and is absorbed into an internally related whole. This self-transcendence of the finite is an instance of a dialectic in which the determinations of sense and understanding, affirmative in form, are shown on sceptical examination to be negative. From the sceptical standpoint, however, this is a pure negation; but dialectics makes every negation a particular negation, since the end of negation is a particular something.¹ Underlying the melting away of finite determinations and their going over into their opposites, there is the process which does not itself "melt away."

The Idea in Hegel points, therefore, to a dialectic, the motion of which is the only sure science, and the procedure of which consists in reducing the level of the understanding and that of reason to a difference in degree. In the approach of the understanding, each proposition has a fixed meaning and leads to another, thus involving a chain of propositions in a determinate order, in which there is no collapsing of elements. Through reason, however, there is a fusion of elements and this fusion, we have indicated, is an analogic reduction, which fills in the gaps created by the categoreal scheme of the understanding.

The motion of the mind in the relation of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis illustrates the same point. When a thesis, which gives to the Idea an objective determination, is taken literally, there is an apparent contradiction, since an antithesis can be exhibited. Only if analogic reduction is possible can there be a resolution. The synthesis itself, however, if regarded literally, as it is by the understanding, becomes a thesis in turn. In ordinary logical proof strictly, this motion of the mind is irrelevant, since in it the movement of the mind is outside the object itself.² Hegel offers as an example of this kind of proof the proof in geometry. The subject-matter of geometry is magnitude, or continuous quantity. Since magnitude is that which determines what is essential to a geometric demonstration, the activity of the mind which performs the proof is outside, i.e., irrelevant to the object. The content of geometry consists, however, in

¹Ibid., pp. 156-67.

²Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Beweise, p. 21: "In dem Gegensatz des Erkennens liegt allerdings die Endlichkeit des Erkennens...."

abstraction from the finite properties of things. Since the motion of such a proof is an activity which is not that of the proof itself, nor the subject-matter of the proof, it involves for Hegel a certain distortion or discrepancy.¹

Opposed to this proof is the proof which is the elevation of the mind to God, the motion of which is that of the proof itself.² In the proof of the existence of God, the motion of the mind is essential, for by considering the active power of the mind as an object, Hegel shows how we can transcend the restrictions which held on the finite level, where mind and being were diverse.

Far from apologizing for the ontological proof, therefore, Hegel insists it is superior to the proof which uses terms and propositions. In the proof, the content of which is the concrete universal, there is no need to progress from one thing to another, but the elevation itself is the proof. The proof which proves itself is an activity of the mind which is practical or creative, for in proving itself, it exhibits the unity of thinking and being.

There is ultimately in Hegel one level of argument, and the idea of God, unique in Anselm, is spread by Hegel's dialectical method over the entire field to which it applies. In other words, there is one absolute, all-comprehensive idea in which the mind and being are one, for the finite level on which mind and being are diverse has been manifested to "transcend itself." Thus, although phenomenologically we begin with sensible immediacy at first, it is wrong to assume that this is the cause of knowledge. It is not sense-certainty which demonstrates absolute knowledge, but absolute knowledge, proving itself, proves sense-certainty.

The two processes--the phenomenological, which proceeds from effect to cause, and the logical, which proceeds from cause to effect--are collapsed in the method of analogic reduction, and distinctions which are made sharply in the two former processes

¹Ibid., p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 14. Cf. Encyklopädie, p. 389: "...die Idee ist selbst die Dialektik..." Cf. ibid., p. 387: "In der Philosophie ist es von jeher um nichts Anderes zu thun gewesen als um die denkende Erkenntnis der Idee, und Allem, was den Namen der Philosophie verdient, hat stets das Gewusstseyn einer absoluten Einheit dessen, was dem Verstand nur in seiner Trennung gilt, zu Grunde gelegen."

merge in a synthetic unity which Hegel calls "the distinction which is no distinction."¹ Starting with the appearance of an effect which is subject to the categorical scheme, the dialectical process has shown that no finite thing resists breaking down. The result of the process is the emergence of the infinite Idea, which is truly one and self-sufficient. The ontological argument is, for Hegel, in its ideal form, the exhibition of the breakdown of the categorical scheme, and it is this form that the Hegelian argument, as such, assumes.

The motion of self-transcendence, in which the dialectic progresses through relative degrees of self-subsistence, is regarded by Hegel as an essential part of the ontological proof. It is the lack of it in Anselm's statement which Hegel finds an imperfection which left it open to the criticisms of Gaunilo and Kant. Hegel himself, however, never stated his own form of the argument in a connected form, his summer lectures on it being in the nature of an initiation. In concluding, we give a brief statement of what we consider to be its essential development. The finite mind, in looking at itself, finds that it cannot itself enclose the idea of that than which nothing greater is possible. Neither is the object of its cognition adequate to such an idea. What cannot be enclosed by the finite mind, or the finite object, is infinite. The infinite is that which encloses in itself the finite mind and the object, and transcends both the subjective and the objective.

When Hegel says that Anselm has failed to show the manner in which the finite transcends itself, we take that to mean that there is one sense in which the mind cannot have as one of its own ideas that which is greater than itself, i.e., in the sense of enclosing it by means of a formal, logical concept.² It is, however, an active power which Hegel calls the self-proving argument; but, by presenting it in the form of a logical concept, one cannot expect it to have the same cogency.

The entire philosophic process in Hegel is a practical, creative process, and may be said, therefore, to move entirely on the level of the creator. As the unity of the theoretic and the practical, the Idea becomes resolute of all the discriminations

¹Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, XIV, 221-22.

²*Ibid.*, p. 167.

which were necessary in the theoretic framework in Kant. By means of the Idea, the philosopher himself is creative of all effects, on a lower level, when he can see the necessary pattern of things rooted in the necessity of the mind.¹ In a sense, therefore, the idea of God was involved in the entire dialectical process, and it is only at the highest degree of that process that there is anything like an analysis of the specific concept of God, as it is given in Anselm. Thus, in answer to Kant's example of the hundred dollars, Hegel replies that Anselm's argument is not concerned with a finite content, but with an idea of something perfect.² In Hegel, however, this is the concrete universal, which was creative throughout the entire process; hence Hegel argues that if existence is demonstrated for any finite content by making it a factor in the organic whole, a fortiori, existence should be granted to the truth which is the systematic totality itself.

Thus, although Hegel and Kant both set out from the standpoint in which the problem of knowledge was central, the methods by which they operate on this problem and the philosophic ends which they serve respectively, turn out to be entirely different. The character of this difference is evident from their treatments of the ontological argument. In Kant, it is philosophically necessary to reject the argument. In Hegel, on the contrary, the philosophic science is in reality a form of the ontological proof.

¹Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Beweise, p. 14: "Dieselbe ist ferner wesentlich in der Natur unseres Geistes begründet, sie ist ihm notwendig; diese Notwendigkeit ist es, die wir in dieser Erhebung vor uns haben, und die Darstellung dieser Notwendigkeit selbst ist nichts anderes als das, was wir sonst Beweisen nennen."

²Hegel, Geschichte der Philosophie, 1836 Edition, XV, 583-86.

CHAPTER IV

THE MODERNS

Within the standpoint of the problem of knowledge, which is represented by Kant and Hegel, there is absent one aspect of the ontological argument which was ingredient in the discussion between Anselm and Gaunilon. As Anselm presents the argument, it is not merely a relation of the concept to the object, but there is also the relation between discourse to both the concept and the object. The enunciation of the Fool denying the existence of God implies that he has in some sense a concept of that the existence of which he is denying. Gaunilon, in questioning the validity of Anselm's proof, brings in the distinction between the character of the word which is enunciated in discourse, and the concept. In Kant and Hegel, however, the problem centers exclusively on the relation between concept and thing. For Kant, the nature of Knowledge is such that no concept can effect what is required by the ontological proof. For Hegel, on the contrary, the nature of knowledge is embodied in the process of a mind which demonstrates that existence is involved in its idea; consequently, it is not merely a "subjective function," but in it the mind is no longer external to the being of the object. Therefore, neither Kant nor Hegel, in his statement of the ontological argument, analyzes the element of discourse which figured as one part of the controversy between Anselm and Gaunilon.

In a philosophy which turns its interest from the problem of knowledge to an analysis of the proposition in logic, it is to be expected that the discussion of our argument would have to undergo a change, corresponding to the manner in which the philosophic interest has shifted. To make the argument amenable to contemporary discussion it must be at least made a point of departure or a subject-matter which is considered philosophically "respectable." This is illustrated by the problem which Hegel faced in formulating the ontological argument so that it might fit into a philosophical atmosphere in which the problem of knowledge was

central: "The first thing we encounter when we seek to make a beginning with the execution of our design is the general end, and insofar as this design is concerned, the repugnant point of view of the presuppositions of present-day culture."¹ The question facing those who wish to re-introduce the argument is therefore the following: In what form can it have bearing on the contemporary philosophical problem?

The basis on which, for example, Hoernlé introduces the argument, throws a good deal of light on what contemporary philosophy considers important, and on the standards which it employs to judge philosophic questions. The title itself is significant, for although the entire article is devoted to a discussion of the ontological argument, the title gives no suggestion of that fact, for it purports to be: "Notes on the Treatment of 'Existence' in Recent Philosophical Literature."² The problems on which a discussion of Anselm's proof should have a bearing are, according to Hoernlé, "the existential import of propositions; the relation of a class to its members; the distinction of kinds of existence and of different universes of discourse; and the question traditional since Kant, namely, whether existence is a quality or not."³

It is interesting, moreover, to notice the manner in which, first stated in the dry historical context of an encyclopedia as a caption under "Theism,"⁴ philosophical interest in the ontological argument is slowly fanned until we may speak of its modern revival: A. E. Taylor's analysis and criticism of Anselm's argument brings a vigorous defense of it from Hoernlé. According to Taylor himself, Anselm's demonstration, "in one form or another, has been a centre of philosophic controversy from the day of its first becoming generally known, to our own day." Moreover, the philosophical exigency to which the argument points is such that its falsity is "an assumption which is fatal to all philosophy and to all science."⁵

¹Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Beweise, p. 2.

²R. F. A. Hoernlé, "Notes on the Treatment of 'Existence' in Recent Philosophical Literature," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, XXIII (1923), 19-38.

³Ibid., p. 19.

⁴A. E. Taylor, "Theism," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, Vol. XI (1928).

⁵Ibid., p. 268.

Another illustration of this process of transmission is to be found in the manner in which Alexander Koyré's work on Anselm,¹ which insisted that Anselm's argument was addressed solely to monks in the silence of their cloisters, influenced one of the most powerful contemporary theologians to give to the Anselmian argument a living reformulation.² In turn, Barth's work stirred Gilson, an acknowledged master in the history of medieval philosophy, to speak directly about an argument on which he had refrained to speak because he preferred to it another form of theological demonstration.³

It is a point worthy of attention, although not entirely necessary to the present analysis, that the form of demonstration which is preferred by Gilson is also the resultant form of Hoernlé's attempt to readjust Anselm's argument to contemporary philosophical needs. Hoernlé refers to the distinction made by Bosanquet between the restricted and the general form of the argument.⁴ As a consequence of Kant's refutation of the Anselmian argument, which is restricted to a unique case, Bosanquet had concluded that the only way to save the argument was to modify its forms so that it showed, in a general mode, the solution to "the problem of ontology," or the problem of "the reference of thought to reality." The principle by means of which the problem is solved is that any thinking whatever implies that "there is something existent which is characterized by our thought," when we think truly.⁵ This, however, is the form of demonstration which is much closer to the proof of God given by St. Augustine, in which there is a hierarchy extending from bare existence up to the act of judging. On this scale, the judging mind is higher than sensible

¹Alexander Koyré, L'Idée de Dieu dans la philosophie de St. Anselme (Paris: J. Vrin, 1923).

²Karl Barth, Fides Quaerens Intellectum (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1931).

³Etienne Gilson, "Sens et nature de l'argument de saint Anselme," Archives d'Histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen-Âge, IX (1934), 1-51.

Cf. Gilson, "The Future of Augustinian Metaphysics," A Monument to Saint Augustine (London: Sheed and Ward, 1930), p. 297.

⁴Bernard Bosanquet, The Meeting of Extremes in Contemporary Philosophy (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1921), p. 83.

⁵Ibid., p. 82.

things, but above the mind there is something which, as a standard, controls its processes. This something may be, according to Augustine, either God or something eternal which is dependent on God. This form of the argument--which, incidentally, is the one preferred by Gilson--is adopted by Hoernlé in preference to the "form" given it by "classical thought," which had restricted it to a theological idea or "ultimate concept."¹

The modern interest in the ontological proof seems, therefore, to center mainly around the form. Its restricted form had, according to Bosanquet, been the cause of Kant's "mocking estimation of it by the most finite of objects."² The restricted formulation had been that of a linear or syllogistic inference. Opposed to this is the implicative form, which is non-syllogistic. Thus the form of Anselm's argument was defective, but its critics ignore "the deeper meaning behind it."³ Of this deeper meaning, the adequate expression is the generalized or implicative form.⁴

A serious application of this modified form of the ontological proof is made by Collingwood, who adopts it as the principle of a philosophy in which it is necessary that something actually exist which is "only expressible in categorical propositions." Unlike the propositions of the empirical sciences, which are hypothetical, and the subject-matter of which is contingent, the propositions of philosophy express "something whose essence involves existence."⁵

The debate between Gilbert Ryle and E. E. Harris arose from the asseverations of Collingwood to the effect that the ontological method furnished the model of philosophic science. Ryle's criticisms of this contention⁶ contain a statement with respect

¹St. Augustine, De Libero Arbitrio, Liber II, Patrologiae Latinae, Migne Edition, Vol. XXXII, Cols. 1242-62.

²Bosanquet, Implication and Linear Inference (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1920).

³Hoernlé, op. cit., p. 163.

⁴Bosanquet, The Meeting of Extremes in Contemporary Philosophy, p. 99: ". . . a systematic method governed by the idea of establishing ordered areas of experience . . . involves a conception of non-syllogistic inference"

⁵R. G. Collingwood, An Essay on Philosophic Method (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 131.

⁶Gilbert Ryle, "Mr. Collingwood and the Ontological Argu-

to the argument, which purports to follow Kant's criticism of the proof. He is surprised, in fact, that anyone should bring up a question which had been settled once and for all by Kant: "It is to me rather shocking that there should exist a large school of thought which treats as a well-established principle, a doctrine which has been for a century and a half accused of formal fallaciousness."¹

Ryle's problem is whether a philosophical demonstration of existence is possible in general. He knows of no answer to the accusation of formal fallaciousness made against the Anselmian proof, but demands that any such answer prepare itself to be tested.² Kant, however, had already shown conclusively that from a proposition which is universal in form, it is impossible to deduce a particular proposition.³ Since existential propositions have some purported reference to a matter of fact, it is necessary to go beyond the formal character of the universal proposition and apply a criterion of evidence by means of which the existence claimed by the proposition may be verified.

To prove that a particular pen exists, it is necessary, according to Ryle, to present evidence that it occupies a determinate part of space at a given time. This need, however, cannot be satisfied by examining premises which are non-empirical, such as those in a rational science and in philosophy. The value of raising the question of the ontological argument is that it allows one to decide "with respect to the nature of philosophical theories, whether philosophical arguments can establish the existence of anything."⁴ If the ontological argument truly demonstrates existence, the evidence for its truth would have to be sought by the same method as empirical scientists employ when they claim

ment," *Mind*, A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy, ed. G. E. Moore, XLIV (1935), 137-51.

¹Ryle, "Back to the Ontological Argument," *ibid.*, XLVI (1937), 57.

²*Ibid.*

³Ryle, "Mr. Collingwood and the Ontological Argument," *op. cit.*, p. 142: "Kant's discovery that particular matters of fact cannot be the implicates of general propositions, and so cannot be demonstrated from a priori premises. . . ."

⁴Ryle, "Back to the Ontological Argument," *op. cit.*, p. 53.

existence for spiral nebulae. If this is impossible, however, then it is not a "well-attested hypothesis adduced to explain phenomena."¹ It appears, therefore, that since philosophy cannot demonstrate in the manner in which the scientist verifies the existence of an empirical datum, the proof of God's existence is impossible.

Characteristically enough for the ontological argument, its refutation, always taken to be final, is followed by a counter-defense.² In this case, the answer is made by Harris, who in defending the argument, repeats the qualification made by Bosanquet and Hoernlé, that the strict Anselmian proof had a superficial form beneath which there was a deeper, underlying truth. Hegel, he continues, had already been aware of its shortcomings, and had given it a form more adequate to its content. Since Ryle repeats Kant's criticism, however, he has failed to answer the corrected form of the argument (which was, in fact, Hegel's refutation of Kant's refutation). Harris, therefore, takes up the argument in the form in which Hegel had left it, and insists that in that form it still remains intact.

For Harris, the problem is whether the datum on which a proposition of empirical science is based can be shown to be a "matter of fact." In order to establish whether or not it is a fact, it is necessary to set up a body of evidence. This can be obtained only from the propositions which are contained within the systematic unity of a rational science. In order to prove that the datum is a "matter of fact," it is necessary to show that the proposition which avers that it is a matter of fact is true. Thus, in order to prove the existence of the pen, which Ryle used as an example, neither an isolated perception nor the isolated proposition is sufficient, but both must form part of an ordered system. In the endeavor to prove existence, therefore, we cannot stop on the level of empirical premises but are compelled to move beyond it, to a body of evidence which is non-empirical.³

In this way, Harris' reduction of the empirical, perceptual element to a non-empirical principle involves a general idea such

¹Ibid., p. 54.

²E. E. Harris, "Mr. Ryle and the Ontological Argument," Mind, XLV (1936), 474.

³Ibid., p. 475.

that the pattern of proof for the existence of God is "ultimately" the same as that for the existence of anything else.¹ There is, therefore, for Harris, a certain sense, although not that of syllogistic inference, in which there is a connection and a transition from universal, non-empirical to empirical propositions.²

Ryle counters to Harris' defense, that if the pattern of proof is the same for the proposition that God exists, as for any other proposition, then it should be capable of empirical verification.³ Thus, if it is possible to affirm that a particular cat has a particular tail, the statement that the ordered world of experience is a manifestation or appearance of something else is either subject to the same tests or it springs from "philosophical considerations." The scientist, however, does not proceed to find evidence for the statement that God exists, as he does with respect to the statement that there are spiral nebulae. Therefore, the proposition that God exists must spring from philosophical considerations, and cannot be demonstrated.⁴

Finally, Ryle points out that Harris' modification of the Anselmian proof is more like the argument from the contingency of the world than the ontological argument. But Kant had already shown that it relies surreptitiously on the latter, and thus falls with its refutation.⁵

Within this third standpoint, our argument has been reduced to the question of the relation of propositions to things. The question has been: How can we speak so that our propositions signify existence? The idea of God has dropped out of the discussion and we are left with the generalized forms of discourse and the problem of what modes of inference are possible within it. The rejection of the argument, beginning with a distinction between the rational and the empirical, rules out the form of argument which goes from one to the other, by making the empirical mode of verification its criterion of evidence. Those who defend the argument here qualify it by generalizing Anselm's argument, and demonstrate existence by showing that it is necessary as a body of philosophical evidence into which rational and empirical propositions may be fitted.

¹Ibid., p. 478.

²Ibid.

³Ryle, "Back to the Ontological Argument," op. cit., p. 54.

⁴Ibid., pp. 54-55.

⁵Ibid., p. 56.

The debate has been conducted in such a way that it is difficult to find a point at which the two sides meet, so that one can estimate between them. At any rate, the ontological argument obtruded itself in such a way as the theme of discussion that the question was at least open as to whether one can assert meaningful propositions only within the limits of an empirical science. Another question, closely bound up with this, which was left open at the end of the discussion, was indicated by Ryle's insistence that the theme of the debate was not strictly scientific, and was therefore to be relegated to the realm of "philosophical theories." Harris, who insisted that the structure lying beyond empirical science is necessary in order that empirical propositions may be rendered significant, complained that Ryle's denial of the argument is no excuse for his failure to show "where it breaks down." The question has been whether we can speak of philosophical argument as if it were a matter of empirical verification. That it has been discussed in these terms is a symptom of what has happened to philosophical arguments as such.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

With reference to the three standpoints on which the ontological argument has appeared, and to the manner in which it has changed its form as it shifted from one to the other, the pattern which it has drawn has been a strange one. Our problem has been to discover it as something which cuts across the various sets of philosophies, the relations of which were submitted to analysis.

Within the first set, the argument was centered in the relation of verbal discourse, the concepts expressed by it, and the existence of things. The issue was whether there was a basis for inferring from knowledge to existence, and if there is, what the character of that basis is. For Anselm, such knowledge is possible because at its peak there is a concept of that, the non-existence of which is impossible, which furnishes a warrant that being and intelligibility are basically one. On its highest level it is embodied in the ontological proof. There is, for Anselm, another relation between knowledge and existence, in which knowledge, adhering to the level of becoming, gives us, at best, the probability of existence. In Gaunilon, however, there is a single relation of knowledge and existence by which knowledge is confined to changing things existing in space and time. In both Anselm and Gaunilon, the measure is furnished by the character of something existing.

Within the second set, the order of discussion of the first set was reversed. The problem there centered around the relation of concept and things. The question at issue was whether there are at our disposal concepts of such a character that we could be said to know something of things themselves. According to Kant, since we have no such concept, there can be no knowledge of things, and the conditions of knowledge cannot be the conditions of things. According to Hegel, however, there is an idea which can become the object of our knowledge, in such a way that the existence of anything can be known by exhibiting its rational

structure with reference to that idea.

In our third set, ideas drop out of consideration, and the problem becomes one of the relation of modes of discourse to things external to the syntax of logical language. For Ryle, there is no mode of discourse which permits us to conclude to the existence of external things, since the logical proposition has a general form, and it is invalid to infer from the universal to the particular. For Harris, however, there is a mode of inference which is not linear but implicative in form, which permits us to connect our general propositions with existing things.

The idea of God, unique in Anselm, is generalized by Hegel and becomes a concrete universal, which, unlike the generality of ordinary, logical concepts, allows us to correlate with its greater degree of generality a correspondingly greater degree of particularity. It becomes possible, thus, to demonstrate, in general, the existence of anything, since that which is empirical is reducible to the amount of dialectical operation necessary to reduce it to the rational structure of the idea. The concept of God, being the highest synthesis, is involved in the entire dialectical process.

As a result of Hegel's generalization of the concept of God, in which all percepts and concepts are reduced to one idea, the modern generalized form of the ontological argument erases the sharp Anselmian distinction between the level of the Creator and that of creatures, and finds it difficult to resist the endeavor of its opponent to reverse the direction of its process of reduction. Thus, Ryle tends to reduce Harris to the absurd, by placing his argument on a level with that of Gaunilon, for Gaunilon had reduced the concept of God to the level of all other concepts. Since the difference between the phenomenological and the transcendental is only a difference in degree for Harris, Ryle treats Harris' transcendental propositions as if they were empirical, and shows that, as empirical, they are absurd.

With respect to the demonstrative aspect of the proof, Kant, Gaunilon, and Ryle agree that it is invalid. In Kant, however, the demonstration is denied because it cannot be achieved by means of purely intellectual processes. In the theoretic order, to conclude from the possibility of an absolutely perfect being to its actual existence is as absurd for Kant as the inference that it is necessary to admit its actual existence on the basis

that it does not have actual existence. This does not imply, however, that for Kant the infinite and the finite are on the same level. Rather, his procedure is relative to the claim to deduce the real existence of the infinite from its logical concept. Since in this theoretic context, all concepts are subject to the same conditions, the demonstration cannot hold. But Ryle, who cites Kant's authority, does not recognize that it is categorial existence which Kant denies is demonstrated. Moreover, Ryle ignores the importance of the fact that it is not the existence of anything in general that is in question in the Anselmian proof, but of an idea with a special character.

Kant and Anselm both treat the idea of God as unique and distinguish it sharply from other concepts. In Kant the device is to discriminate carefully between phenomena and noumena. In Anselm the discrimination is between the level of the Creator and that of the creature. In Anselm, however, the validity of the demonstration is due to the fact that there is a difference in kind between the Creator and the creature, and that the demonstration operates exclusively on one of the levels. In Hegel the difference between the two levels is one of degree rather than of kind, the ontological proof being that stage in the development of the idea in which the mind and the object are united.

The ontological argument is recognizable, therefore, as a peculiar mode of uniting a specific idea and a manner of demonstrating existence in connection with that idea. We have shown how the repeated contention that it is valid constituted a basis for philosophy which, in its strict form, has at its peak a principle which is unique, the analysis of which is essentially philosophic in character. There was shown in Kant, however, an equally strict mode according to which its validity was rejected, the rejection having been made necessary by a philosophical system in which the uniqueness of its principle would be destroyed by such a demonstration.

On the other hand, the deviation from the argument, in which the strict idea is generalized, involved it in the danger of being confused with empirical elements which are contingent in character. As soon as this happens, however, as in the debate between Ryle and Harris, the proponent of the argument must appeal to the difference of character between that which, being contingent, is at best probable, and that which, being necessary, its

contrary would be impossible. In that case, the ontological argument in its strict form is re-invoked in order to prevent the confusion of philosophic truth with an aggregate of makeshift "truths" which may turn out to be false in the course of time. In that case, its persistent recurrence is a sign that although philosophical problems may be Schein-probleme, they seek for only those apparent solutions which are philosophic in character.

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